

ETHINT 63 - ()

15 Aug 45

A n I N T E R V I E W W i t h
G e n m a j O t t o R E M E R



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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HISTORICAL DIVISION
SPECIAL STAFF, UNITED STATES ARMY
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

12 July 1949

Note to: ETHINF 63

By: Kenneth W. Hechler
Major, Infantry (Res)

No record in German was made at the time of this oral interview, inasmuch as Lt. Merriam took notes in English on the remarks of General Remer as they were translated by the interpreter. Lt. Merriam then used his English notes as the basis for this report which he prepared after the completion of the oral interview.

This was the only oral or written interview which Lt. Merriam had concerning matters other than the Ardennes Offensive. From previous readings on the 20 July 1944 plot, Lt. Merriam was particularly interested in collecting details on this affair, with the possible hope that he might later publish a book or magazine article devoted to the German story behind this plot.

(The first paragraph of the above is based on a general knowledge of the way in which Lt. Merriam operated; the second paragraph is based on what Lt. Merriam told me personally.)

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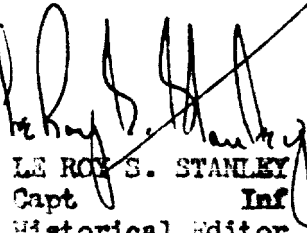
EXHIBIT 63 - ()

Title : The 20 Jul 44 Plot
Source : Genmaj (then Obst) Remer, Otto
Position : Cmdr, Guard Regt "Grossdeutschland"
Date : 15 Aug 45
Place : PW Camp # 26, Third US Army
Interviewer : 1st Lt Robert E. Merriam
Interpreter : T/5 Walter Becker, IFW Team # 119

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Foreword

This interview is one of a series conducted by the Historical Section, ETOUSA, and its successors. Unfortunately, only a typed record in English is available for editing. It is not known whether a record in German was made at the time of the interview, nor, if one was made, can the accuracy of the translation be determined. Therefore, no absolute guarantee can be given as to the authenticity and completeness of detail of this version of the interview. Only obvious errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammatical construction have been corrected. All parenthetical statements, except those of the interviewer and editor, which are identified as such, are as they appear in the available record.


LE ROY S. STANLEY
Capt Inf
Historical Editor

MAY 31 1948

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1. After five years of fighting with Pz Div "Grossdeutschland," in France, the Balkans, and Russia, I was brought back to Berlin for a rest, and was given command of the Honor Battalion guarding the Government headquarters. Prior to this command, I had been acting commander of a panzer grenadier regiment in Pz Div "Grossdeutschland." This Wach (Guard) Bn, besides having the mission of protecting the Government, also represented the Army in Berlin.

2. When I assumed command of the Battalion, my predecessor warned me to be on guard because on Wehrmacht Day in 1943 (sometime during March), a putsch had been attempted against the Government but had been nipped in the bud. My predecessor further stated that this putsch had never been disclosed, not even to Goebbels, because it was thought it would be better not to disturb the nation by letting it be known that an attempt had been made to overthrow the Fuehrer. I immediately recognized the responsibilities of my position, especially in view of the fact that at that time we had over a million foreign workers in Berlin, and that, if any revolution did start, these people would be a very great menace.

3. As part of the plans for the defense of the Berlin area, we had two mobilization schemes already prepared, both of which involved use of the Replacement Army in Berlin. We had code words for the eventuality of either an enemy crossing of the border or of an internal revolution; upon receipt of these respective code names, I immediately was to mobilize my unit for action. "Gneisenau" was the code name for an internal revolution.

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4. About 1500 on 20 Jul 44, I received a telephone call giving the code word "Gneisenau." This call came from the Office of the Military Commander in Berlin, Gen von Hase; I was ordered to report to him immediately. I arrived at the Commander's office and found a number of general officers and other high personages already assembled there. When I entered the room, I noticed that the G-3 (Hd: not further identified) appeared very pale and that apparently a new man by the name of Maj von Hajessem had replaced him. The atmosphere was very tense. I was told that the Fuehrer had died by accident, that a revolution had broken out, that the executive powers had passed to the Army, and that I was to block off a certain district of the Government agencies so that no one could get in or out.

5. That statement, combined with the tenseness of the atmosphere and the warning my predecessor had given me, put me on guard. To alleviate my doubt, I asked Gen von Hase the following six questions:

- (1) Is the Fuehrer dead?
- (2) Where is the revolution? I saw none as I came to your headquarters from mine.
- (3) Are the revolutionists foreign workers?
- (4) Why has the executive power passed to the Army rather than the Armed Forces (Wehrmacht)?
- (5) Who is the successor to Hitler?
- (6) Who has signed the orders giving control to the Army?

6. I received no satisfactory answers to these questions.

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However, I returned to my Battalion and immediately called a conference of officers at which I ordered a ring placed around the Government buildings, and gave instructions that no one was to accept any orders unless they were given by me personally. The entire situation looked suspicious to me, but I did not know what was going on.

7. Although the ring was placed around the Government buildings, it was not complete because the subway had not been cut off, nor had communications been cut. The Army Headquarters had been told that an Obstdt Wolter would be down to assist me in these technical matters. When this officer arrived, he immediately said that I need not be afraid of him, that he was not a spy. This made me extremely suspicious because I could not understand why he would think I would regard him as a spy unless something unusual was going on.

8. After the meeting of my officers, one of my lieutenants, named Hagen, called me aside and said that he wished to report that he had seen Genfldm von Brauchitsch in the streets. He expressed extreme surprise at this as Von Brauchitsch had been retired for some time and was not often seen in Berlin. The lieutenant suggested that he contact a man for whom he worked prior to his entrance into the Army. He said this man was not one of the "master race" and might be able to give some suggestions on the situation. I sent him to see this former employer of his.

9. After we formed the ring around the Government buildings, I was ordered to watch particularly the section near the railroad station, which was where the security police were located. A short time later, as I was moving through the streets, I spotted an Obst Schaefer, whom I

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remembered as one of the men mentioned by my predecessor as being involved in the 1943 putsch. (Interviewer's Note: Genmaj Ramer said that Schaefer was not arrested at the time of the 1943 putsch because the Government wanted to keep the attempt a secret. Schaefer had tested the hand of the conspirators in the 1943 putsch by coming to Genmaj Ramer's predecessor and asking him what the situation was.) I later learned that Schaefer was to take command of my Honor Guard Battalion.

10. A short time later, I was called again to the office of the Military Commander where I was told that Goebbels was to be arrested and that I was the man to do it. I said that I did not wish to make the arrest because Goebbels had been the protector of the Pz Div "Grossdeutschland" and that I had an allegiance to him. It finally was agreed that some of the Military Police would make this arrest.

11. When I returned to my headquarters, I found Lt Hagen waiting for me. He had seen his former employer who in turn had sent him to see Goebbels. He had spoken briefly with Goebbels, who did not believe the facts presented to him until he had seen some armored vehicles driving around outside. Goebbels then sent Hagen back to see me with word that apparently a military putsch was intended and that I was to report to him.

12. I went with Hagen to see Gen von Hasse, and there I had the lieutenant relate his visit with Goebbels. At the conclusion of this, I asked Von Hasse if I might go to see Goebbels, which he forbade me to do. Because I felt that Von Hasse did not seem to be aware of the situation and because after considerable reasoning with myself I decided that Goebbels, in the position as Commissioner of Defense for Berlin, was in reality my

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superior, I finally decided that I should go to see him despite the fact that Von Hasse had refused my request.

13. I went to Goebbels' office and was immediately ushered in to see him. Before I had gone in, I had told a group of my men I had brought with me that if I were not back in 20 minutes they should come up to get me. I did this because I did not fully trust Goebbels and wanted to make sure that he was not also involved.

14. I was immediately admitted to Goebbels' office and the first question that he asked me was, "Are you a Nazi officer?" I told him that I had taken my oath to the Fuehrer and that I intended to keep it even if he were dead. Goebbels then said, "What do you know about the situation?" I told him what I had previously heard, and he said that this could not be true because he had talked to the Fuehrer over the telephone. I then asked Goebbels if he were behind the Fuehrer; he reached out his hand and gave me his word of honor that he was. Then Goebbels asked me what I had done and I told him as much as I thought it was advisable to tell; I was still not absolutely certain that Goebbels was loyal. I told him that I wanted to talk with the Fuehrer to ascertain for myself that he was still alive. He said this could be arranged and in three minutes I was talking with the Fuehrer. He said to me, "Now we have the criminals and saboteurs of the Eastern Front. Only a few officers are involved and we will eliminate them from the roots. You are placed in a historic position. You are responsible to use your head. You are under my command until Himmler arrives to take over the Replacement Army. Do you understand me?"

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At the end of the conversation, Goering, who was present, asked me what the Fuehrer had said and I related the conversation in substance. I also told Goering that I had immediately confirmed the actual situation to the Armies (Ed: ??) moving toward Berlin and that I would inform Genmaj von Hasse of the situation and do everything I could to prevent unnecessary bloodshed.

15. By this time, a tank formation had been alerted and was assembling in the Berliner Plats. Although this group thought that I was with the revolution, I was able to get in touch with them just in time to prevent any bloodshed. I then assumed command of the tanks and used them to help prevent any shots being fired. Six officers to whom I spoke believed me when I said Hitler was alive and that I knew what to do. I called on the Replacement Army to send additional people. Previously, Goering had said he was going to call out the SS, but I told him that they should keep the SS out of this, that it was an Army job and they should let us finish it.

16. At this time, there was a report of some shooting and I was ordered to block the sector where the brains of the putsch were supposed to be. Although the new government had placed troops from a panzer unit around this area, I was able to talk with them in time to effect their withdrawal. When I went to the area of the shooting which had been reported by Goering, I saw Gen Fromm (Ed: Genobst Friedrich Fromm) of the Replacement Army. I said to him, "You are a man from the Pz Div 'Grossdeutschland.'" What are your orders?" At the same time Kaltenbrunner, Chief of the Gestapo (Ed: probably Ogruf Dr Ernst

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Kaltenbrunner, Chief of Security Police and Security Service), also came and shortly thereafter Himmler arrived; the crisis had passed.

17. I will now relate to you the happenings at the Binderblock, which I have heard only from people who were there. Count von Stauffenberg, who had placed the bomb in Hitler's Headquarters, which was in Rastenburg at that time, believed that Hitler was dead because he had successfully placed the bomb, heard the explosion, and gotten away. Von Stauffenberg returned to Berlin by airplane, but, typical of the mentality of the plotters, had neglected to arrange for a car to meet him at the airport. As a result, he had to wait an hour for transportation into town.

18. Von Stauffenberg went to the Binderblock, where, with Genobst Hoepner and others, he tried to play at revolution. At this time, Gen Fromm tried to arrest Stauffenberg, but instead was arrested himself by the Military Police. (Ed: As this officer can be identified as Genobst Friedrich Fromm, Genmaj Remer's account of his actions that follow is confusing. As Genobst Fromm was executed 14 May 45 for participation in the plot, it can only be assumed that either he was executed for a crime of which he was innocent or, seeing that the plot was doomed to failure, decided to try to save himself by turning on his fellow conspirators.) At this point, Fromm requested Von Brauchitsch to come to the Binderblock. Von Brauchitsch had been asked to participate in the Putsch, but he was not interested and had returned to his home. The Commander of Wehrkreis III, Gen von Kortzfleisch, was also invited to participate, and was arrested when he refused to take part.

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19. The entire thing was very naive. Telephones were intact and neither the populace nor the Army was against Hitler. If the plot had been successful, Hitler and the Nazis would have become great martyrs rather than die the death they now have suffered.

20. Gen von Kortsfleisch made a great deal of trouble when he was arrested; he went somewhat crazy, and threw ink wells and other things around the room. When this fracas started, it attracted the attention of some general officers on the floor above, and these officers armed themselves and came down to free Von Kortsfleisch and Fromm. When this was accomplished, Gen Fromm immediately held a court-martial on the spot and sentenced to death seven of the persons involved in the plot. These officers were shot in the courtyard by some of my soldiers, with the lights of automobiles illuminating the courtyard. Among those immediately shot was Count von Stauffenberg. Gen Beck, the former Chief of the General Staff, was allowed to kill himself. Genobst Hoepfer was allowed to live temporarily because they thought he had much more information on the plot. Genfldm von Witzleben, being of superior rank to Gen Fromm who headed the court-martial, could not be shot; however, he later was hanged.

21. In my opinion the brains of the Putsch rests with Count von Stauffenberg.

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FROM CPM

SECRET

SECRET

AUTH: CG Third US Army
DATE: 30 August 1945
INIT: A.C.A.

HEADQUARTERS
THIRD UNITED STATES ARMY
Interrogation Center (Provisional)

INTERROGATION REPORT No 34

Source: REMER, Otto, Generalmajor, AIG 1372 30 August 1945

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I. COVER AND DECEPTION PRIOR TO THE ARDENNES OFFENSIVE

(Based on USSEP Interrogation Brief No 3,
dated 13 July 1945)

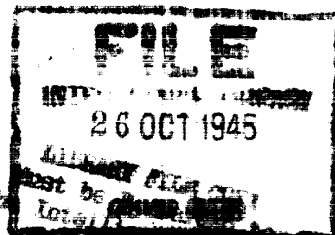
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INTERROGATION REPORT No 34I. Cover and Deception Prior to the ARDENNES Offensive

This report was prepared in answer to USFET Interrogation Brief No 3, dated 13 July 1945.

Preamble. Generalmajor Otto Ernst REMER, source for the answers to this questionnaire, is the Major REMER, formerly in command of the Wachbataillon in BERLIN, who was instrumental in checking the military follow-through of the 20 July 1944 plot against HITLER's life. He assumed command of the Fuehrer Begleit Brigade (Brigade REMER) shortly before the ARDENNES offensive.

The Fuehrer Begleit Brigade left RASTENBURG, Ostpreussen, about 25 November for DAUN, (Eifel) (GSGS 4346/K 51/L 3577) and was first committed in the ST VITH area (GSGS 4042/6/P 88), whence it advanced towards LAROCHE (GSGS 4042/6/P 47). On 27 December Brigade REMER was committed west of BASTOGNE (GSGS 4042/6/P 55) in order to secure German positions in this sector.

Brigade REMER was composed of the following elements at the start of the ARDENNES offensive:

Flak Abteilung
Grenadier Bataillon 1 (SPW)
Grenadier Bataillon 2 (Mot)
Grenadier Bataillon zbV 928 (later Grenadier Bataillon 3)
Artillerie Abteilung
Panzer Abteilung
Heeres Sturmgeschuetz Abteilung 200
Panzer Regiments Stab
Nachrichten Abteilung
Feld Ersatz Abteilung

Answers to the Questionnaire.

1. What security measures were adopted by German unit commanders between the time they received initial orders concerning the ARDENNES offensive and 16 December 1944?

a. Radio security. From the arrival of the Fuehrer Begleit Brigade in the west in early December 1944 until the commitment of the brigade on 18 December 1944, the unit kept a strict radio silence. There were no exercises with radio-communication sets. Even the use of private radio sets at lowest level was prohibited.

b. False radio traffic. Although the Brigade REMER used no false radio traffic, some was employed by higher echelons.

c. Security of troop movements to avoid identification by aircraft. Before and during the offensive all troop movements were executed by night or in unfavorable flying weather.

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INTERROGATION REPORT No 34I. Cover and Deception Prior to the ARDENNES Offensive
(Continued)

In clear weather only single vehicles were permitted to travel on roads. An order was issued that convoys which had hauled supplies to the front during the night should travel during daylight in an eastward direction in order to deceive the enemy by faking a withdrawal of troops from the front lines. Vehicles, particularly tracked armored vehicles, were parked in woods outside of towns. AA defenses were passive, and only in case of an air attack on military targets were they to open fire.

Special care was taken to enforce camouflage discipline in towns. Traces of tanks were removed, and the assembly or marching of large bodies of men was prohibited. The use of road-markers and sign-posts by units in villages or on roads was prohibited; unit markers were not displayed on billets. Only during actual road marches could markers be posted, showing the names of commanding officers as unit identification. Road control by military police was very strict, and roads could be used by unit convoys only in accordance with a schedule. All vehicle bumper markings were painted over. During the transport of tanks on railway flatcars, camouflage had to conceal the vehicles in such a way that they could not be recognized from the air as tanks.

Supply dumps of all kinds were dispersed very skillfully in forests, especially pine woods. Roads leading to and from supply installations were widened to avoid traffic jams. RR trains near the zone of operations were kept in tunnels or in woods during daylight. The unloading of trains was spread over many small stations, and facilities were prepared so that unloading could be done very quickly. Motor vehicles could drive only to within 10 km of the front. Artillery, ammunition, and bridge-building equipment was moved by horse-drawn vehicles the last 10 km.

At night, strict blackout discipline was maintained.

Many of these security measures had been SOP in the Wehrmacht for some time. However, during the period in question special care was taken to insure strictest enforcement of these rules.

d. Issuance of detailed orders only to senior officers. All preparations for the offensive were carefully concealed from tactical commanders as well as from the troops. Rumors were spread intimating that the troop concentrations were necessary to hold off an expected Allied attack from north of the Eifel. Orientation was given to small groups of officers, scheduled according to the importance of each unit's mission, and held as shortly as possible before the start of the offensive. This schedule (Terminkalender) was approximately as follows: Briefing for Corps commanders, D minus eight days; for division commanders, D minus six days; for lower echelon unit commanders, D minus one day. Before the briefing, each officer was sworn to secrecy, and told that violation would be punished by death.

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INTERROGATION REPORT No 34I. Cover and Deception Prior to the ARDENNES Offensive
(Continued)

REMER himself took part in two briefings and sandtable exercises. The first one took place at Corps headquarters approximately eight days before the start of the offensive. He does not remember which corps it was. Here he was informed about his mission for the first time. The second briefing was held at headquarters of General KRUEGER's XLVIII Corps.

The following problems were discussed: movement into assembly and jumping-off areas; artillery positions and ammunition supply; disposition of elements not taking part in the attack; movement of bridge-building equipment; method of attack for units taking part in the jump-off (shock troops testing for weak spots, etc); supply of reinforcements; dealing with pockets of resistance in overrun areas; supplies.

No notes could be taken during the briefing, and maps and orders used were collected again at the end of the meeting. Missions and problems which came up during the exercises could be referred to or employed only indirectly in discussions with other officers or in the training of troops. Orders, both written and verbal, maps, etc, could be handled only by a liaison officer especially assigned to this job. During troop movements or on the march into the assembly area, nothing could be disclosed to the men, and only one day before the commitment were they informed about their mission.

e. Censorship. Shortly before and during a move by rail, no letters or other communications could be sent by the troops, and censorship of mail in general was tightened before the start of the offensive. Troops were strictly forbidden to use the civilian postal system, or to telephone, and only letters containing general information were passed by the censors. The civilian postal system was also placed under censorship.

f. Special security indoctrination of individuals. There was no change in the scope and subject matter of the security lectures usually given to troops by their unit commanders; however, these lectures were given more frequently during the period before the start of the offensive. These sessions also were used, REMER states, for the deliberate spreading of false rumors.

2. Give details concerning the movement of troops immediately prior to the ARDENNES offensive.

a. Time and place of departure. The Brigade REMER left the area of RASTENBURG, Vittershausen, by RR on 25 and 26 November 1944; it comprised only units of the Brigade stationed in the vicinity of RASTENBURG.

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INTERROGATION REPORT No 34I. Cover and Deception Prior to the ARDENNES Offensive
(Continued)

b. Time and place of arrival. The units mentioned in a. above arrived in the area of DAUN (Eifel) (GSGS 4346/K 51/L 3577), on 29 and 30 November 1944. The following units arrived in the DAUN area in the order listed below, during December, the last one arriving 15 December 1944:

Artillery Abteilung (newly activated)
Heeres Sturmgeschuetz Abteilung
Panzer Abteilung
Panzer Regiments Stab

c. Method of transportation. Transportation was by rail, save for a few small motor convoys.

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